

CITY OF SAN JOSE
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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May 10, 2007

Mr. Darryl Boyd,
Director
Department of Planning, Building,
and Code Enforcement
200 East Santa Clara Street, 3rd Floor
San José, CA 95113
(408) 535-3555

Subject: Comments on the City of San Jose's Coyote Valley Specific Plan and Coyote Valley Draft Environmental Impact Report

Dear Mr. Boyd,

I recently had a chance to meet you in person when my Environmental Impact Assessment class, at San Jose State University taught by Rachel O'Malley, went on a tour of the Coyote Valley and am thrilled to have such an in depth look into the EIR process. While I am encouraged by the innovative thinking that both you and the City of San Jose have had for the development in the Coyote Valley, I am saddened that an area of such biodiversity and value for the City of San Jose and Santa Clara County will ultimately be lost.

The proposed plan has some good aspects like the concept of bring jobs and housing to the South San Jose region but on the other hand, the loss of agricultural land and open space areas should not be the cost that we have to pay. What I am most concerned about is the massive construction that will be taking place well within the known area of critical habitat for a number of endangered species. Citizens are very lucky living in Santa Clara County to have an area where the development of Coyote Valley has been restricted so that the beauty of the valley is allowed to live on. The county of Santa Clara for so long have been subject to the loss of thousands of acres of prime agricultural land and open space such that we should encourage the preservation of those lands to ensure that future generations can see what makes this county and valley so unique. It is my opinion that it is unenviable that the development of Coyote Valley will likely happen at some time but the City of San Jose should try to restrict the development to as little as possible to minimize the lasting footprint of development.

Now in regards to the actually Coyote Valley Specific Plan itself, the document is innovating because it promotes smart growth for the City of San Jose, which has never been done before. While the development of the Coyote Valley has been proposed since the 1970's, there was a reason for the Coyote Valley Greenbelt was established and that boundary should be kept in tact as much as possible. While the city council for San Jose has already voted to change the zoning in the Coyote Valley, I believe that they should abide by the proposal that the Local Agency Formation Commission has made. The city should honor the policy of requiring a one-to-one preservation of

agricultural lands, which would require the City of San Jose to find over 5,000 of prime agricultural lands that are within the county.

As part of the Environmental Impact Assessment class that I am currently enrolled in at San Jose State University, I was able to dive into the Draft EIR and focus on a specific section to complete my report on. The section that I focused on was the section on hydrology. This section was done very well but I have some questions about a number of sections on in hydrology that has a cumulative impact of less than significant. The one of importance was the significance level of less than significant for impacts to groundwater resources. With an increase in the amount of demand for water with development, the groundwater levels will greatly decrease unless drastic steps are taken to mitigate those losses would result in a less than significant with mitigation incorporation impact significance level. Possible mitigation measures include water reduction by installing water - efficient appliances and utilities. Also, possible recycled water use can help combat decreases in groundwater resources for those uses deemed non-potable or for non-human consumption like irrigation for both the industrial and housing units proposed. I have also read in the current housing development plans, an artificial lake. While this sounds like a sure way to decrease groundwater depletion, how is that water going to maintained and transported into the lake that will prevent water shortages in the future? That question has not been fully addressed in the Coyote Valley Specific Plan and Draft EIR and as a result I am confused on the real purpose of the artificial lake.

Another section that I felt should have had a less than significant with mitigation incorporation level was if the proposed project would result in flooding impacts as the result of development in the Coyote Valley. Sure the DEIR proposes a movement of Fisher Creek, but no one really knows what to expect. A flash flood could occur unless the proper techniques are taken like the build up the riparian habitat in the flood plain that will serve as a natural defense and protection.

As a resident of this fine city I hope that the biodiversity of Coyote Valley and South San Jose will be preserved so that future generations will be able to experience the sites that I am able to view today. While I know development may ultimately occur, I hope the City of San Jose will do its part to ensure that development is not sprawled across the valley. You have the ability for the first time in the City's history to encourage smart growth. With the proposed plans for Coyote Valley the City of San Jose has considered the massive impacts that large scale development will cause and has taken steps to help minimize the impact and as a result, all future development will continue as a slowed pace.

Sincerely,


Danielle Carmichael
Student, San Jose State University
Environmental Studies Major